



# The International Fancy Guppy Association



Dedicated to Promoting The Fancy Guppy Hobby

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## Disease Prevention In Your Fishroom

By Luke Roebuck

One of the most upsetting circumstances to inflict itself upon the guppy fancier is an outbreak of disease in their fishroom or fish tanks.

Infectious diseases can create havoc with us hobbyists by causing large fish losses, loss of quality strains, lost time in selective breeding, sleepless nights and extra work and investment in fish medications, to name a few. All of us, from the expert to the novice have had our share of disease problems in one form or another. Some of the more experienced hobbyists have learned to cope or prevent major outbreaks of disease, some have not. The novice gets confused and befuddled by disease outbreaks and ends up spending money on various medications, some of which do not work. If the fish do recover they will never be the same, not to mention attaining show quality.

The most efficient cost effective way to avoid outbreaks of disease is prevention by undertaking certain basic procedures in your everyday maintenance of your fishroom. Before I delve into that topic, I should mention some of the basic diseases which we commonly encounter in our guppy tanks. Diseases come in several forms: A) Parasitic, B) Bacterial/ FunCol, c) Internal Worms/Parasites, D) Non contagious Diseases, i.e. Tuberculosis, Dropsy, genetically inherited weaknesses such as bent spine etc. The topic of disease is so vast I could not possibly cover enough in this article, nor was this article intended to cover disease or treatment, mainly prevention. Parasitic diseases such as ick, velvet, cotton wool disease, leeches that attack the fins and skin of your guppies are fairly common in improperly maintained tanks and occur very seldom in properly cared for aquarium environments. Bacterial diseases such as columnaris, fin rot, eye fungus, etc., which also attack the skin, fins, eyes and also occur internally in the fish's blood and organ tissue are also common in unkempt environments and occur even in the advanced hobbyist's tanks. They require a similar approach to prevention but are sometimes a bit more difficult to prevent and sometimes takes the eye of experience to spot in your fish.

Internal worms such as tapeworms, roundworms, or nematodes such as Callmanus and parasites such as Hexamifia are also fairly frequent and can occur in properly cared for tanks. They are more difficult to prevent for the unknowledgeable or unwary hobbyist.

Genetically inherited diseases can occur when improper breeder parents are chosen to start your breeding program. Fish with these problems need to be disposed of immediately and no attempt is made to maintain or cure.

The other diseases will occur occasionally even in the well maintained tanks since we are all not perfect in our rearing techniques. Some treatment medication and drugs or chemicals should be kept in stock in the event of such occurrence. Some chemicals such as formaldehyde, salt and stress coat formulas are used on a semi-regular basis for disease prevention. Antibiotics used to treat bacterial infections should only be used when there are obvious signs of a bacterial infection treatable by the drug. They should never be used frequently as a preventative as the bacteria will develop a resistance to the drug thereby rendering the drug useless in the future.

Regular use of disease preventative chemicals such as formaldehyde can all but eliminate any form of external parasitic infections. I have not seen ick, velvet or external parasites on my fish since I started using the drug along with salt in my tanks and this has become a major aspect of disease prevention in my fishroom.

One of the foremost criteria is preventing disease outbreaks and planning for good healthy environment is learning how to control stress in your guppies. A stressed fish will soon become a sick fish and then a dead fish. In order to prevent your guppies from becoming stressed, you need to be aware of some of their basic requirements which occur in their native environment.

Temperature requirements:

65 - 90°F, optimum range 74 - 84 degrees. Keeping them at either extremity can be quite stressful and alters their metabolic rate.

Food:

Omnivorous animal as well as vegetable matter, i.e. mosquito larvae, bloodworms, rotifers, brine shrimp, spirulina, algae, spinach, infusoria, etc.

Water:

Medium hard, slightly acid to slightly alkaline, pH 6.8 - 7.4. Guppies are very sensitive for extremes in pH since they live in near rainwater conditions. Their small stream living conditions offer constant and regular water change to fresh so there is no buildup of toxic wastes such as ammonia, nitrites or salts. Oxygen content is fairly high in the maximum solubility to temperature range (6.5 - 9.0 mg/liter).

Lighting:

Bright daylight for 12 hours a day and darkness for 12 hours a day so they can sleep, Full sunlight for a few hours a day assists in vitamin D production along with development of skin chromat.



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Thank you Bryan Chin, Gene Baudier, Jay Crane, Luke Roebuck and Stan Shubel for their photo donations.

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